

Original Article

S.P.E.A.K. (Speech Performance, Engagement, Articulation, and Knowledge): An Intervention to Enhance Oral Communication Skills among Senior High School Students

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Abstract

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of Grade 11 students who participated in the S.P.E.A.K. intervention, a program designed to enhance oral communication skills. Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, ten students were interviewed through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Findings revealed that students overcame anxiety, gained confidence, felt motivated through interactive learning, and experienced a supportive environment. The most effective components were regular speaking practice that improved fluency, engagement activities that encouraged real-world communication, and articulation exercises that strengthened speech clarity. Despite these benefits, students identified limitations such as limited impromptu speaking opportunities, need for extended practice, desire for individualized feedback, uneven emphasis on components, and time constraints. These results suggest that while the S.P.E.A.K. intervention effectively enhances speaking skills and confidence, improvements such as more spontaneous speaking, personalized guidance, balanced activities, and longer practice sessions could increase its effectiveness.

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1. Introduction

Oral communication is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success, social interaction, and future employability in the 21st century (Thompson, 2020). In educational settings, the ability to articulate ideas clearly and confidently has been identified as a key component of students' overall language proficiency and self-efficacy (Wang & Sun, 2020). However, despite the inclusion of oral communication in the senior high school English curriculum, many Filipino students continue to struggle with fluency, pronunciation, and confidence when speaking English. This difficulty often stems from limited authentic speaking opportunities, anxiety in performance-based tasks, and the dominance of teacher-centered instruction in the classroom (Pregoner et al., 2024).

In the Philippine context, the emphasis on communicative competence highlights the need for pedagogical innovations that bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical speaking performance (Retherford et al., 2025). Yet, several studies have noted that while students possess basic grammatical and lexical knowledge, their ability to use English effectively in spontaneous communication remains limited (Basher et al., 2025; Zega, 2025). Such limitations hinder not only their classroom participation but also their preparedness for higher education and employment, where oral communication is a crucial soft skill (Tang, 2019).

Addressing this issue requires structured interventions that foster active engagement, reflective articulation, and collaborative speaking experiences. The SPEAK (Speech Performance, Engagement, Articulation, and Knowledge) intervention is conceptualized as a learner-centered program that integrates performance-based tasks, peer feedback, and reflective speaking activities to improve students' oral competence. It aims to create a supportive environment where learners can develop speech confidence, enhance pronunciation accuracy, and deepen their understanding of communicative strategies. Through systematic exposure to interactive and meaningful speaking contexts, students are expected to gain not only linguistic proficiency but also the motivation and self-assurance to communicate effectively in English.

This study seeks to implement and evaluate the SPEAK Intervention among senior high school students to determine its effectiveness in enhancing their oral communication skills. By focusing on the components of speech performance, engagement, articulation, and knowledge, the intervention aspires to transform traditional language instruction into a dynamic process that empowers learners to express their ideas confidently and authentically. Findings from this study may contribute to curriculum enhancement, teacher professional development, and the broader goal of producing globally competent communicators in Philippine education.

1.1 The S.P.E.A.K. Intervention

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, effective oral communication is one of the most valuable skills for student success. Senior high school students often experience anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited opportunities to practice English speaking in authentic contexts. The S.P.E.A.K. Intervention is designed to address these challenges through a focused and interactive framework that cultivates confidence, fluency, and communicative competence. Each component of the acronym represents a key aspect of speaking development, ensuring a holistic approach to improving learners' oral communication abilities (Table 1).

Speech Performance. Speech performance emphasizes the delivery, organization, and expressiveness of oral communication. This component includes structured speaking activities such as prepared speeches, storytelling, and short presentations that train students to use tone, pace, gestures, and eye contact effectively. Students will be guided on speech structure—from introduction to conclusion—and evaluated through performance rubrics that highlight their growth in clarity, coherence, and stage presence.

Engagement. Engagement focuses on active participation and sustained interest in speaking activities. The intervention will feature dynamic exercises such as role-playing, debates, and interactive discussions that encourage students to speak spontaneously and meaningfully. Through collaboration and peer interaction, students will develop the confidence to express their ideas in both formal and informal settings, fostering a classroom culture where English speaking becomes natural and enjoyable.

Articulation. Articulation involves the precision, pronunciation, and clarity of spoken words. This component will integrate phonetic drills, tongue twisters, and pronunciation workshops to refine students' articulation and accent. Students will also practice stress and intonation patterns through expressive reading and conversational simulations, helping them achieve fluency and intelligibility in real communication situations.

Knowledge. Knowledge serves as the foundation for meaningful communication. This element will strengthen students' vocabulary, grammar, and understanding of context-appropriate expressions. Lessons will integrate language enrichment activities, vocabulary expansion tasks, and situational speaking practices that align linguistic accuracy with communicative effectiveness. Through guided reflection, students will learn to use English strategically choosing the right words, tone, and expressions for different audiences.

Table 1. Teaching–learning strategies utilized and desired outcomes per S.P.E.A.K. component.

S.P.E.A.K. Component	Strategies	Desired Outcomes
Speech Performance	Prepared speeches, storytelling activities, short presentations, and speech delivery coaching	Improved organization and delivery of speeches, enhanced use of tone and gestures, increased confidence in public speaking
Engagement	Role-playing, debates, interactive discussions, and collaborative speaking tasks	Higher student participation, active involvement in class discussions, greater enjoyment and interest in speaking activities
Articulation	Pronunciation drills, phonetic exercises, tongue twisters, and expressive reading sessions	Clearer articulation and pronunciation, refined speech rhythm and intonation, improved intelligibility during communication
Knowledge	Vocabulary-building games, contextual speaking exercises, grammar reinforcement through dialogue, and reflective language journals	Expanded vocabulary, accurate grammar usage in speech, improved ability to select appropriate expressions and language structures

1.2 Action Research Questions

1. How did the students experience and perceive the S.P.E.A.K. intervention as a program aimed at enhancing their oral communication skills?
2. Which specific component of the S.P.E.A.K. intervention did the students identify as the most effective and beneficial in improving their speaking performance?
3. Which aspects of the S.P.E.A.K. intervention was perceived as less effective or insufficient in addressing the students' oral communication needs?

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design to examine the impact of the S.P.E.A.K. intervention on the oral communication skills of senior high school students. In this approach, both the researcher and the students were actively involved in every stage of the research process—from planning and implementation to evaluation of the strategies. The goal of PAR was to promote collaboration and participation among the students, enabling them to learn and enhance their English-speaking abilities through shared reflection and practice.

2.2 Research Participants

The participants consisted of a group of senior high school students from selected secondary schools in Davao City. After the implementation of the S.P.E.A.K. intervention, a total of ten (10) students were chosen for qualitative data collection. Six (6) students participated in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), while four (4) students underwent In-Depth Interviews (IDI). All participants were enrolled in the Oral Communication subject, as the focus of the study was to enhance English-speaking proficiency. The participants voluntarily joined the study after providing informed consent, and for those under 18 years of age, assent forms were obtained. Each participant had a basic understanding of English, which allowed them to engage effectively in the activities and discussions.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure

Several essential steps were undertaken to ensure a systematic and ethical research process. First, ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee to guarantee adherence to research ethics, including participant consent, confidentiality, and protection of students' rights. A formal letter was then submitted to the principal of the selected school to request permission and to present the study's objectives, significance, and methods. Upon approval, the S.P.E.A.K. intervention was carried out with the students to evaluate its impact on their speaking abilities in English. Data were gathered through focus group discussions and individual interviews conducted after the intervention.

The S.P.E.A.K. intervention was implemented by the researcher over the course of one school year during the 2024–2025 academic year, involving one section of senior high school students. After the completion of the intervention, the researcher selected six (6) students to participate in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and four (4) students for In-Depth Interviews (IDI). The researcher facilitated all activities and guided the participants throughout the program to assess the intervention's effectiveness and impact on their oral communication development. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes from the responses of the students in the FGD and IDI. The participants' narratives were examined to explore their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the S.P.E.A.K. intervention and its influence on their speaking abilities. Codes and themes were generated to represent the key aspects of the intervention that contributed to their improvement in English oral communication skills. The analysis highlighted the components of the program that were perceived as most effective, as well as areas that required enhancement.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical principles were observed throughout the conduct of the study to ensure participant safety and well-being. Informed consent and assent forms were provided to all participants, who voluntarily agreed to join the study with a clear understanding of its purpose and procedures. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, with all data stored securely and participants' identities kept anonymous in reports and publications. Transparency was also emphasized at all stages of the research, ensuring that the objectives, methods, and outcomes were clearly communicated to both participants and school administrators.

3. Results

This study explored how students experienced and perceived the **S.P.E.A.K. (Speech Performance, Engagement, Articulation, and Knowledge)** intervention as a program designed to enhance their oral communication skills. It also examined which specific components of the intervention were identified as the most effective in improving speaking performance, and which aspects were perceived as less effective in addressing students' oral communication needs. Ten Grade 11 students participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) after completing the intervention. Thematic analysis of their narratives yielded nine themes, three for each research focus area.

3.1. Students' Experiences and Perceptions of the S.P.E.A.K. Intervention

Theme 1: From Fear to Confidence

Students reported that the intervention helped them overcome their anxiety about speaking in English. The structured activities and constant practice enabled them to speak with greater confidence and reduced fear of judgment. Participants expressed:

P1: "Before S.P.E.A.K., I was afraid to talk in English. Now, I can speak more confidently in front of others."

P4: "The program helped me conquer my stage fright."

P8: "I realized that mistakes are normal and that helped me gain courage."

Theme 2: Motivation Through Interactive Learning

The engaging nature of the activities made students look forward to each session. They viewed the intervention as enjoyable, participatory, and different from typical classroom routines. Participants shared:

P2: "I liked that every session was fun and made me want to participate."

P5: "We were learning, but it didn't feel like a formal lesson."

P9: "S.P.E.A.K. made English classes more exciting and motivating."

Theme 3: Building a Supportive Learning Environment

Students appreciated the collaboration and encouragement from peers during group activities, which fostered a sense of belonging and support. Participants emphasized:

P3: "Everyone was helping each other improve."

P6: "I felt comfortable because my classmates cheered for me."

P10: "We became more confident because we worked as a team."

3.2. Most Effective Components of the S.P.E.A.K. Intervention

Theme 1: Practice Builds Fluency and Confidence

Students identified the Practice element as the most beneficial component. Regular speaking drills, storytelling, and oral presentations helped them improve fluency, pronunciation, and delivery. Participants mentioned:

P1: "Practicing every day helped me speak more smoothly."

P5: "The activities trained me to think quickly when speaking."

P7: "It made me less nervous and more fluent in English."

Theme 2: Engagement Promotes Real-World Communication

The Engagement component, which involved interactive activities such as impromptu speaking and debates, helped students become more spontaneous and expressive. Participants expressed:

P2: "The debates taught me to speak my ideas clearly."

P8: "Engagement activities felt like real conversations."

P9: "I learned how to react and express myself better in English."

Theme 3: Articulation and Knowledge Strengthen Speech Precision

The Articulation and Knowledge components enhanced students' pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical awareness. Constructive feedback allowed them to refine their language use. Participants highlighted:

P3: "I became more careful with my pronunciation."

P6: "I learned to use better words and expressions."

P10: "The feedback made me aware of my weaknesses and helped me improve."

3.3. Perceived Limitations and Less Effective Aspects of the S.P.E.A.K. Intervention

Theme 1: Limited Spontaneous Speaking Opportunities

Students shared that while the activities improved their confidence, most were rehearsed and structured. They expressed a desire for more unscripted speaking experiences to develop spontaneity and real-life communication skills. Participants expressed:

P1: "Most of our speeches were prepared. I think impromptu speaking would help us think faster."

P4: "I wanted more real conversations or role-plays, not just formal speeches."

P7: "It would be nice to practice speaking like in real situations."

Theme 2: Need for Extended Practice

Participants appreciated the articulation and vocabulary exercises but felt that limited time restricted mastery. They believed that longer sessions or additional practice periods would help them strengthen fluency and pronunciation. Participants mentioned:

P2: "The drills were helpful, but we needed more time to repeat and master them."

P5: "Sometimes, we had to rush through the exercises."

P8: "If we had more sessions, I think we could improve our pronunciation more."

Theme 3: Desire for Individualized Feedback

Students valued the feedback provided by the teacher but wanted more personalized comments tailored to their specific challenges. They believed that targeted feedback would better guide their improvement. Participants highlighted:

P3: "The feedback was general, and I wanted to know exactly what I should improve."

P6: "Personal coaching would help us know our strengths and weaknesses."

P9: "I wanted detailed comments on my delivery and grammar."

Theme 4: Uneven Focus Across Components

While students found the S.P.E.A.K. program engaging, some felt that certain components, like Knowledge and Engagement—were more emphasized than others.

They suggested a more balanced approach to strengthen all areas equally. Participants emphasized:

P2: *"We did more vocabulary games than articulation drills."*

P5: *"Speech performance was fun, but articulation needed more time."*

P7: *"All parts were good, but some were focused on more than others."*

Theme 5: Time Constraints in Implementation

Several participants noted that the limited time allotted for each session sometimes reduced opportunities for reflection and deeper learning. They recommended extending the program to sustain improvement. Participants expressed:

P1: *"The activities were great, but they felt too short."*

P4: *"We needed more time to apply what we learned."*

P10: *"If S.P.E.A.K. was done longer, we could gain more confidence."*

4. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the S.P.E.A.K. (Speech Performance, Engagement, Articulation, and Knowledge) intervention provided meaningful learning experiences that enhanced students' oral communication confidence, participation, and linguistic awareness. Students' narratives reflected how structured yet engaging activities nurtured growth in self-expression and fluency, while also highlighting areas where the program could be further refined to sustain improvement and promote individualized learning.

The first emerging theme, From Fear to Confidence, demonstrated a clear transformation in students' self-perception as speakers. Before the intervention, most participants expressed anxiety and hesitation in speaking English. Through consistent practice and guided exposure, they developed a stronger sense of assurance and reduced their fear of judgment. This shift reflects Bandura's (1986) concept of self-efficacy, wherein repeated successful performances enhance confidence and motivation. The findings also align with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggesting that a supportive and low-anxiety environment facilitates language learning. As students overcame their fear, they became more open to engaging in speaking tasks and expressing ideas in English.

Complementing this confidence-building process, the theme Motivation Through Interactive Learning highlighted that enjoyment and active participation played vital roles in sustaining engagement. Students described the sessions as dynamic, fun, and distinct from traditional English classes. Activities such as debates, role-playing, and storytelling encouraged spontaneous interaction and creative expression. These findings affirm Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing that intrinsic motivation flourishes when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The program's interactive structure transformed

language learning into an enjoyable social experience that fostered both skill development and motivation.

Moreover, the theme Building a Supportive Learning Environment underscored the value of collaboration and peer encouragement. Participants appreciated that the S.P.E.A.K. sessions fostered cooperation and mutual support, making them more comfortable speaking in front of others. This sense of community resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which posits that learning is socially mediated and strengthened through cooperative interaction. The students' collective growth through teamwork demonstrated that social bonds and empathy can be powerful enablers of linguistic and emotional confidence.

In identifying the most effective elements of the intervention, the theme Practice Builds Fluency and Confidence stood out. Frequent oral practice—through storytelling, presentations, and drills—allowed students to internalize speech patterns, resulting in smoother delivery and reduced hesitation. This aligns with DeKeyser's (2007) Skill Acquisition Theory, which states that repeated performance converts knowledge into automatic, fluent behavior. The structured repetition provided the scaffolding needed for learners to refine pronunciation, pacing, and expression.

The theme Engagement Promotes Real-World Communication emphasized that interactive and spontaneous speaking activities enhanced students' ability to communicate in authentic contexts. Students reported that debates and impromptu tasks improved their responsiveness and confidence in expressing ideas naturally. This mirrors principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s through the works of Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and Littlewood (1981), emphasizing that authentic speaking tasks are key to developing communicative competence. The intervention's experiential learning design thus effectively bridged the gap between classroom practice and real-world application.

Likewise, the theme Articulation and Knowledge Strengthen Speech Precision revealed that explicit instruction and feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar heightened students' linguistic awareness. The process of receiving feedback and applying corrections aligns with Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, emphasizing that awareness of language form is critical for improvement. Students' reflections indicated that they became more conscious of how words should sound and be structured, enhancing both clarity and confidence in speech delivery.

While the overall experience of S.P.E.A.K. was positive, students also identified areas for improvement. The theme Limited Spontaneous Speaking Opportunities showed that most activities were rehearsed, and participants desired more impromptu speaking exercises to develop real-time communication skills. Integrating unscripted dialogue could further enhance fluency and adaptability, reinforcing Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis that authentic language use fosters deeper linguistic processing. Similarly, the theme Need for Extended Practice pointed out that short sessions limited mastery and retention. Students believed that longer or more frequent sessions would allow better reinforcement of articulation and

pronunciation skills, consistent with the notion that distributed practice promotes long-term learning.

Furthermore, the theme Desire for Individualized Feedback reflected students' need for more targeted guidance to address specific weaknesses. Personalized feedback, as supported by Black and Wiliam's (1998) formative assessment framework, could help learners identify concrete areas for growth and sustain motivation through individualized progress tracking. The theme Uneven Focus Across Components also revealed that some elements, such as articulation, received less emphasis compared to others. A more balanced integration of all S.P.E.A.K. components could ensure holistic oral competence. Lastly, the theme Time Constraints in Implementation highlighted that limited time prevented deeper reflection and continuous skill reinforcement. Extending the intervention could enable sustained development of speaking proficiency and learner confidence.

Overall, the discussion underscores that the S.P.E.A.K. intervention effectively enhanced students' oral communication skills by fostering confidence, motivation, collaboration, and linguistic precision. However, to optimize its impact, future implementations should include more spontaneous speaking opportunities, extended practice time, personalized feedback mechanisms, and balanced attention across all program components. When these refinements are integrated, S.P.E.A.K. can serve as a sustainable and comprehensive model for improving English oral proficiency in secondary education.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of the S.P.E.A.K. (Speech Performance, Engagement, Articulation, and Knowledge) intervention demonstrated its effectiveness as an innovative and learner-centered approach to enhancing students' oral communication skills. The program successfully addressed students' fear of speaking, improved their confidence, and fostered greater participation in interactive learning activities. Through structured yet engaging experiences, learners developed not only fluency and articulation but also a deeper understanding of how to express themselves meaningfully and accurately in English. Students' reflections revealed that consistent practice, interactive engagement, and constructive feedback were key contributors to their speaking improvement. These findings affirm the importance of providing communicative and supportive learning environments where learners can actively practice language in authentic contexts. Moreover, the integration of knowledge-based and articulation-focused tasks allowed students to refine both their linguistic and performance dimensions, supporting the holistic development of oral communication competence. Despite its overall success, the study also identified areas for further enhancement, particularly the need for more spontaneous speaking opportunities, extended practice sessions, and individualized feedback. Addressing these aspects can make the S.P.E.A.K. program more responsive to diverse learner needs and ensure balanced development across all components. In conclusion, the S.P.E.A.K.

intervention proved to be a meaningful and effective framework for cultivating learners' confidence, fluency, and communicative competence. Its combination of structured guidance, interactive engagement, and reflective practice highlights its potential as a sustainable model for oral communication instruction in senior high school settings. With continued refinement and implementation, S.P.E.A.K. can serve as a practical and impactful strategy for empowering students to speak with confidence, clarity, and purpose in both academic and real-world contexts.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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